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The Benefits of Children with ESRD and a Renal Transplant Attending a Specialty Camp

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Problem: Children with end-stage renal disease as a chronic illness are often isolated from their peers for a variety of reasons and often are depressed, developmentally behind their peers, and suffer depression and a lack of self-confidence. These children require intense disease education, management and opportunities to develop ways to enhance their emotional, physical and psychological well-being. Also, young adults have a high degree of allograft graft loss as they begin to become more independent and begin college or live on their own. There are many camp opportunities across the United States to assist these transplant recipients under age 18 with the above. Camp BRIDGES is a camp specifically for pediatric renal, liver and heart transplant recipients, but also provides a camp opportunity for young adults aged 18-25 as well.

Approach: Camp BRIDGES is a specialty camp in Alabama that provides camp experiences each summer for children who have had a renal, liver or heart transplant. This camp provides camp opportunities at a family camp, that allow the recipient and all immediate house hold members to attend; a teen camp for those 13-18 (or having just graduated high school); and a young adult camp for those 18-25 in order to help assist them as they transition to independence. There are various persons who work with each age group, and all activities and educational sessions are geared to the age group attending that camp.

Results: By offering these opportunities, we have found over the years that transplant recipients are more self-confident, more educated regarding their medical condition, and have the opportunity to grow emotionally by spending time with peers.

Conclusion: By offering these opportunities, transplant recipients are more comfortable with themselves and with others, and are better able to understand their transplant needs.

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